NUMB. XXIII.

# The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

*What! Dares the Slave*
*Come hither, cover'd with an* ANTICK *Face,*
*And* MOCK *at our Solemnity?*

SHAK. Rom. & Jul.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28. 1735.

THE Buſineſs of the *Prompter* is *general*: Ev'ry Perſon that goes out of *Character*, and plays a wrong *Part*, (let the *Scene* lie where it will, and the *Actors* be what they pleaſe) is *his* proper Object, and lays Claim to Correction.

HITHERTO *He* has either laugh'd at the Delinquents, or *mildly* expoſtulated with them. — His Satyr has wore a Mask, that had more of *Sneer* than *Severity*. — But there are *Vices* as well as *Follies*, which, by being more dangerous in their Conſequences, require more *rigid* Chaſtiſements; in ſpeaking to theſe, it may not be improper to aſſume a graver LOOK, and put a SCOURGE in the Hand of his Satyr, that may make him FELT.

I WAS induced the laſt Maſquerade-Night, to wait upon a Couple of Ladies thither, who had never been at that Aſſembly, and would not then venture without a Guardian. I made my Entry there, to comply with their Humour, like a grave *Dominican Friar*, with what they were pleaſed to call the Enſigns of my Order, *Themſelves habited like* NUNS, *attached* to my Girdle. — I met with ſeveral arch Reprimands, for appearing there ſo unlike what a venerable Son of the Church ought to be, and was threatened with Informations to be made againſt me to my Superior, unleſs I would compound Matters, by giving up my *Religious Siſters*, — A Ceſſion I could not in Honour make. — I debated the Matter a long time, againſt the Obſtinacy of a TURK, and a SAVAGE, who pretended a Right; the firſt, becauſe he had dropt his Handkerchief at the Feet of one of my Siſters; and the ſecond, becauſe, having run his *Match* in the Face of the other, ſhe, in the Fright, had *blown it out*; and began to be afraid of ſome little Violence; when we were at once drawn off from our Conteſt, by the ſudden Appearance of a *Punch* preceded by a *Harlequin*, who, with his Wooden Sword, cleared the Way, while the other diſtributed to all he met, a printed Bill, a Copy of which is as follows.

G. R.

*By Permiſſion.*

" THIS is to give Notice to all Gentlemen,
" Ladies, and others, that at the Opera-houſe,
" in the *Hay-market*, this preſent Evening, will be
" preſented the comical and diverting Humours of
" *Punch*.

" AND on *Thurſday* next, by the *Norfolk* Com-
" pany of artificial Comedians, at *Robin's* great
" Theatrical Booth in *Palace-Yard*, will be pre-
" ſented a comical and diverting Play of SEVEN
" ACTS, called COURT and COUNTRY; in which
" will be revived, the entertaining Scene of the
" TWO BLUNDERING BROTHERS, with the Cheats
" of *Rabbi Robin*, Prime-Miniſter of King *Solomon*;
" the whole concluding with a great Maſque, cal-
" led, *The Downfall of* Sejanus, or, *The Stateſman's*
" *Overthrow*, with Axes, Gibbets, and other De-
" corations proper to the Play. To begin exactly
" at Twelve o' Clock.

" N. B. *There are a new Set of Puppets, as big*
" *as the Life, chief Part of which have been*
" *brought up from all Parts of the Country, at*
" *a very great Expence.*

Vivant Rex & Regina.

PUNCH, as he began, executed his Commiſſion with ſo wrong a *Dexterity*, that he deliver'd ſome of his Bills, as I have been informed, into ROYAL HANDS; after which, both he and his Companion diſappeared.

A SCENE ſo unexpected, and ſo unuſual in a Place deſign'd as a Relaxation from the ſeverer Buſineſs of Life, and looked upon as the Theatre of *Mirth* and *inoffenſive Wit*, filled me with an equal Mixture of *Contempt* and *Surprize*, at the mean Arts to which *Private Enmity* and *Perſonal Malice* has ſometimes Recourſe.

To conſider it abſtractedly from *Party*, a Tranſaction of this Nature, carries along with it ſuch a *Breach of Good Manners*, ſuch an *intruſive Violence* on the *general Intention* of the Perſons aſſembled there, as no Gentleman, or Man of Senſe, that will allow himſelf Time to think coolly, can ever juſtify. — The doing of it under the Covert of a Mask, has the ſame aggravating Circumſtance, that attends the Guilt of thoſe that STAB IN THE DARK. But it is not only a want of good Breeding in general; it is a perſonal Affront to His Majeſty, to diſturb a Company he honours with his Preſence. — And that Perſon who is capable of offering ſuch an Affront, is guilty of a notorious Breach of ONE PART of a Subject's Duty, very conſiſtent with the warmeſt Sentiments of *Patriotiſm* and *Liberty viz.* A Reſpect for the *Preſence* and *Perſon* of *Majeſty*, which has ever been accounted *ſacred*, and ever *muſt*, while political Societies ſubſiſt in the World.

IT would be a poor Subterfuge, to ſay, His Majeſty being equally diſguiſed, with the reſt of the Company, can no more be ſuppoſed to be there, than any private Perſon whatſoever, and that therefore it cou'd be no Affront to the ROYAL PRESENCE, ſince it is well known almoſt to every body, not only that His Majeſty is preſent, but under what Diſguiſe he appears. — But allowing this Cavil for once, the very Contents of the Paper direct every Reader to fix the Affront as the Author deſigned it; which, upon Examination, becomes indeed more general than at firſt View, and takes in, not only the ROYAL PERSON, but THE AUGUST ASSEMBLY, that compoſes one great Branch of our excellent Conſtitution, and THE GENTLEMEN intruſted by his Majeſty with the Adminiſtration of Affairs. — To treat *any*, or *all* of theſe with *Contempt*, can never ariſe from the true *Spirit* of *Patriotiſm*, or Love of *Liberty*, which teaches to *reſpect* the FIRST and SECOND, and allows a Right, not of *perſonal Abuſe* againſt the laſt, (which is unbecoming both the Gentleman and Man of Senſe) but of examining into their Conduct, as far as the Knowledge of the PATRIOT, can be ſuppoſed to extend, and ADEQUATELY judge of the Actions of the MINISTER. He that goes farther, forfeits, both the Character of *Patriot* and *Lover* of Liberty, and preſents to View, a Man as little Maſter of his *Paſſions* as his *Reaſon*; A Character no more to be *envy'd* than *eſteem'd*.

To conſider the Paper itſelf in a political Light, would be exceeding the Office of the Prompter, whoſe Buſineſs, tho' general, does not extend ſo far, as to intermeddle with the Adminiſtration of publick Affairs. It is ſufficient for him, if the *Patriot* attacks, or the *Miniſter* defends himſelf *out of Character*, to *prompt* both, and ſet them right; and it is in this View only that he has taken upon him to condemn the Action, that has occaſioned the Writing of this Day's Paper. — He can't however withſtand the Temptation of making an Obſervation, or two, on the Satyriſts, which is, that the Dart they *ſhoot* at the *Miniſter*, has *wounded* themſelves moſt; for is it not a Matter of infinite Surprize, that ſuch a numerous, *wiſe*, and *clear-ſighted* Band of *Opponents*, ſupported by a Spirit of *Patriotiſm* and *Liberty*, ſhould not be able to make head againſt a Couple of BLUNDERING BROTHERS, as they *invidiouſly* ſtile them. An indifferent Joker would be apt to ſay, That the greateſt *Blunder* they commit in the Eye of their Evil-wiſhers, is, that they ſtill BLUNDER ON, in ſpite of their UNERRING Skill, and Deſire of throwing them out of their Seats. He wou'd perhaps be for taking away the BLUNDERING IMPUTATION, and carrying it back to the preſent Donors of it, who might ſeem in his Opinion more juſtly entitled to it.

UPON the whole, the Spirit of Party has ſpread ſo much of late, that to it in great meaſure may be aſcribed the general want of Encouragement too viſible in every Branch of *Knowledge*, *Learning*, *Wit*, or *Humour*. Our Theatres want *Auditors* whoſe Minds are at leiſure to attend to their Productions, and *Authors* whoſe Wit is not *engroſſed for* or *againſt* the *Miniſtry*. — Should this Spirit go further, and be inſinuated ſtill more in the Minds of People, we muſt bid adieu to ev'ry Pleaſure of Life. — The Stage muſt no longer play the natural *Paſſions* or *Follies* of Mankind, but act the political one, or ſhut up: We muſt have *Harlequin — Prime Miniſter*, or *Harlequin — Patriot*, or elſe no body will come. *Maſquerades* muſt at laſt, under the Change theſe political Reformers have begun, be a Theatre where *Civil Diſcord* is to ſupply the Place of *agreeable Mirth*, and baniſh ev'ry Paſſion, but *Party-Love* or *Hate*. — Even Love will not eſcape the Contagion; and inſtead of thoſe tender Converſations that uſed to add a Charm to the Mouths that uttered them, we ſhall have *Miniſterial* and *Patriot* Couples *battling* their Hours away in *Party Debates*. — At this Rate, Things muſt go on, if *Party-Spirit* continues to enlarge itſelf, as it has done of late. And to *what* elſe will this be owing, but to the *private Reſentment* of a few Perſons, who *write* to all *Ranks* of People, in order to intereſt Mankind in their Quarrels, and make them *love* or *hate* as they do.

AS the publick Pleaſures of a free Nation are of Conſequence and Effect *to the Minds of the People*, every thing that tends to *leſſen* or *debaſe* them, is wrong, and falls immediately under the *Laſh* of the *Prompter*, whoſe Buſineſs is to keep ev'ry body in Character, and give the Word, from the *Higheſt* to the *Loweſt*.

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Printed for T. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-noſter Row*: Where LETTERS to the AUTHOR are taken in. And where the former Numbers may be had.

[*Price Two-Pence.*]

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